Ideas for Town Meeting Policies, Guidelines, and Preparations

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The following is a list of areas where documentation of existing and/or new policies, guidelines, or preparations may allow Town Meeting to run more smoothly or help participants better understand what to expect. It may not be feasible to address documentation for all areas due to prioritization or feasibility. In some cases, it may be necessary to create a written record of existing practices or to make them more explicit; in other cases, it may be necessary to create new practices altogether.

Additional ideas may be emailed to gchristiana@town.arlington.ma.us for consideration.

Preparations

- Criteria and/or process for determining whether to convene TM in person vs remotely
- Preparations for network outage
  - establish plan for network outages when meeting in person: mobile hotspots for presentation computer and Moderator's computer, local backups of content needed to run the meeting
- Line-up of National Anthem performances
  - call for performers in advance
  - assemble contact list for school choirs and other groups
- Preparation for bake sales during Town Meeting
  - assemble contact list for school groups who might be interested in participating
  - see Bake Sale FAQ from HHS

Procedures

- Rules for Budget Amendments (mainly Town Budgets and Capital Budget)
  - clarify limitations on amendments, e.g. amendments allowed to top-line budget numbers, but not line items, sub-budgets, or individual staff positions
- Clarify 48-hour rule for amendments and substitute motions
  - initial submissions required 2 business days in advance
  - revisions allowed based on Moderator feedback
  - clarify whether the rule applies to other types of motions, e.g. motion to divide, referral to committee, etc
- Consent Agenda
  - Criteria for Articles to be included in (and held from) the Consent Agenda
    - threshold for holding an Article
    - whether Articles can be held in advance

- for comparison, see Lexington's guidelines:
  https://lexingtonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5196/Consent-Agenda-with-Article-Descriptions-PDF
  - ○ Construction of Consent Agenda to split Legislative Articles into their own part (implemented at 2023 ATM)
    - some TMMs need to recuse themselves from voting on Articles relating to legislation presented to the State Legislature
    - splitting the Legislative Articles into their own part of the Consent Agenda allows those TMMs to vote on the non-legislative Consent Agenda Articles

Speaking and Presenting

- Guidelines for speakers at TM
  - ○ Introducing oneself as a speaker:
    - TMMs: name and precinct
    - Town committee members: name and committee membership
    - Town staff: name and office/title
    - Town residents: name and street address
    - non-residents: name and residency or affiliation
  - ○ Invited speakers
    - guidelines / FAQ for speakers so they know what to expect
    - if minors intend to speak, policy for acquiring permission from parent/guardian(s) in advance
- Guidelines for presentations at TM
  - ○ video allowed if relevant, e.g. drone aerial footage, but no spoken audio
  - ○ 16x9 widescreen format
  - ○ font guidelines for legibility
  - ○ for comparison, see Lexington's guidelines:
    https://www.lexingtonma.gov/579/Creating-Presentations-for-Town-Meeting

Printed Materials

- Official materials
  - ○ Deadlines for publishing major board/committee reports ahead of Town Meeting to allow time for inclusion in the printed and distributed Town Meeting packet
  - ○ Town offices (e.g. Clerk or Select Board) print official materials such as all approved amendments and substitute motions, as well as official reports (for a subset of committees and boards)
- Unofficial materials
  - ○ TMMs can print their own copies for distribution via a table at or near TMM check-in
  - ○ no printed materials distributed on seats